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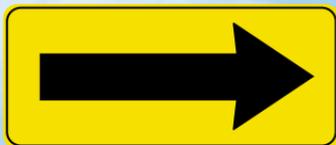
Pathways to Progress

**An Action
Agenda
for 2002-2003**

Presented by:
**Tom Watkins,
Superintendent of
Public Instruction
Michigan Department
of Education**

All Together Now

Priorities for 2002-2003



The Department of Education accomplished a great deal in the past year with your help. Now, we choose to focus not on past achievements, but rather on present and future

challenges: on what remains undone. And on what *must* be done with your involvement to improve the quality of our public schools and ensure academic progress for every child.

The Smart Investment: Breaking with Tradition

It's an undeniable fact and a truth for our times: *Neighborhood public schools are the best economic development investment we can make.* The state that succeeds in creating an education system that leaves no child behind will be the state that drives the economy of the 21st century. If Michigan is to be that state, all of us must be invested in helping to transform our schools into world-class learning centers.

A Lofty Goal. But What Does That Mean in Practical Terms?

It means *moving from tradition-driven to knowledge-driven models of education.*

It means committing ourselves to *true reform from within*, and coupling that reform with measured and measurable progress.

It means *leaping into the future* rather than clinging to the past, taking appropriate risks, and showing the same spirit of daring and innovation that led earlier generations of Michiganders to challenge the horse-and-buggy industry by developing the automobile.

It means calling attention to the many *positive things that are happening in our neighborhood public schools* every day and persuading the media to do the same.

It means ensuring that *policy makers know and understand the critical issues in public education*, value our children as their own, and devote themselves relentlessly to the quest for successful outcomes.

It means demanding that our *legislators allocate resources* to priority issues in education.

It means creating a *Blueprint for Education Success*, in collaboration with the Education Alliance and communities everywhere...and doing it now rather than later.

Unfinished Business: Our 2002-2003 Agenda

The items in this report form the basis for our work plan in the coming year...and the next Governor's "To Do" list for the foreseeable future. We offer these issues and ideas to you as an inspiration, a challenge, a catalyst, a motivator, a starting point, and a reminder of all that remains to be done if Michigan is to lead the way in public education.

One thing is certain. This has to be a community effort, a state-wide effort. We must think boldly and creatively. We must set aside partisan differences. And we must continue to work collaboratively to forge new coalitions, review old decisions, and address emerging issues. Capitalizing on the energies of a new Governor and new Legislators, we must re-dedicate ourselves to creating opportunities for all of our children to learn and succeed in the 21st century.

My Thanks, My Promise

I am grateful for this opportunity to do what could well be the most meaningful work of my career. I pledge to use my skills and knowledge to their fullest, and to lead in ways that ensure that we will reach and surpass the State Board of Education's strategic goal. When every child in Michigan achieves substantial and meaningful academic achievement, our work will be finished. Until then, we must work together. Our children deserve our very best!

Let the work begin!

Sincerely,

Tom Watkins

Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 1, 2002

Together, our active and conscious leadership will move us into a new era where educational opportunity and academic progress are a reality for every child. Perhaps our new slogan should be:

“Michigan Education: It Begins With ME!”

**Invest
in the Early
Years**

Research indicates that 85 percent of the brain is developed before the age of four. Guided by this remarkable fact, we must invest our time, energy and resources to ensure that all children have access to optimal learning opportunities during the crucial youngest years. We need new ideas and approaches. For example...Should public school education run from age 4 to 17 rather than 5 to 18? Should we recommend that every high school senior devote a year to community service, as a way of giving back and gaining life skills?



**Connect
the
Generations**

Grandparental involvement should be encouraged from earliest childhood on, as a way of building bridges to the next generation. Invoking the concept of “Senior Power” from 30 Ideas in 30 Days, we could appoint a Director of Seniors to coordinate efforts at sharing values and life lessons with the younger generation.

**Eradicate
Illiteracy**

Reading is the single most important measure of future success. According to a recent study, 85 percent of prisoners in penitentiaries are illiterate. What’s more, Hugh Price, president of the Urban League, has noted that criminologists extrapolate the fourth grade failure rate to determine how many prison beds will be needed in the future. And the predominant reason for failure of the fourth grade is the inability to read.

This is tragic. It is a waste of human potential as well as a drain on our state’s financial resources. Education YES!, the new state accreditation system, calls for each elementary and middle school child to read independently, at least at grade level. With that goal in mind, we are actively pursuing \$28.6 million in federal reading grants to be invested in Michigan’s children.

READ!



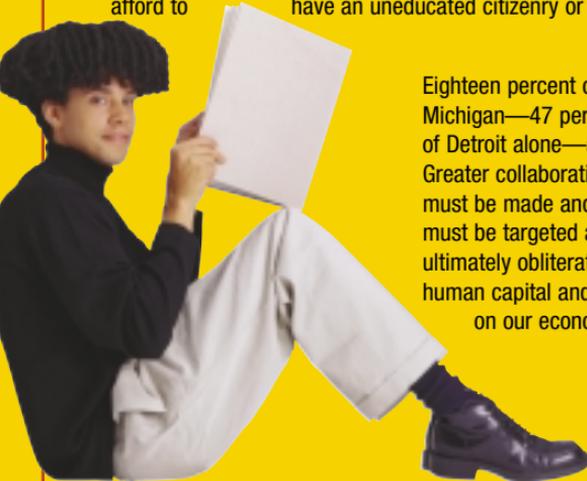


Stop State-Sponsored Stupidity

We call for repeal of the statute that allows children to drop out—or be pushed out of school—at the age of 16. High school dropouts can no longer find gainful employment. Most children do not drop out to work on a family farm.

The military will not accept them, and factories will not hire them. If traditional public schools are not able or willing to meet the needs of these children, I challenge the Legislature to allow for the creation of charter schools that will do so.

Every child belongs in a learning environment with appropriate educational programs. We must engage creative, caring minds and hearts to assist school districts in identifying alternative ways to keep kids engaged and interested in school. Michigan can no longer afford to have an uneducated citizenry or workforce.



Eighteen percent of adults in Michigan—47 percent in the City of Detroit alone—are illiterate. Greater collaborative efforts must be made and resources must be targeted at reducing, and ultimately obliterating, this waste of human capital and the subsequent drain on our economy.



Promote Adult Literacy



Educate for Work-World Realities

Michigan is no longer a state where a strong back can guarantee a hefty paycheck. Here, as everywhere else in America, lifting for a living has been replaced by thinking for a living. However, not all high paying jobs require four-year college degrees. So let's call for a new collaboration among community colleges, K-12 education, apprenticeship and skilled trade programs, and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to ensure that our children are prepared to thrive as we move into the 21st century.





Engage the Public



Efforts will continue to put the “public” back into public education. Education is far too important to our collective future to be solely left to educators. We must engage the skills, intelligence, imagination, and commitment of every stakeholder. Businesses, colleges and universities, non-profit agencies, legislators, labor organizations, parents, faith-based organizations, senior citizens, and students must become partners in re-thinking and reshaping our system of public education.

Improve Interagency Cooperation

Let’s raise the volume on our call to the Human Services Cabinet to dispense with turf fights and serve the children of Michigan in the best way possible. Attention must focus on the needs of youngsters and their families in order to optimize scarce resources. Leadership that models cooperation and collaboration will ensure the delivery of wraparound services that promote productive and safe lifestyles for all of our children.

Realign Education Policy

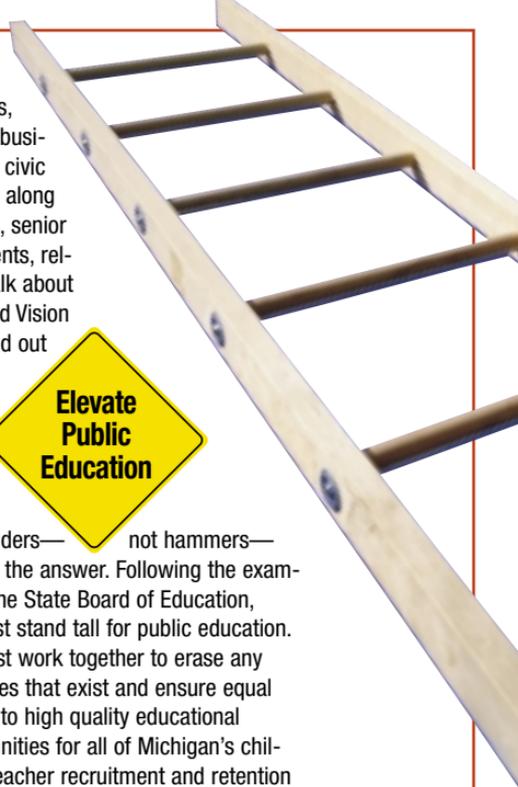


Over the past decade, education policy and authority have been scattered throughout state government. Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and Merit Awards reside in the Department of Treasury. Vocational, GED programming and postsecondary education are in the Department of Career Development. Data collection and the Standard and Poors School Evaluation Service are in the Center for Education Performance and Information (CEPI), now a part of the State Budget Office.

Service learning and community service are part of the Michigan Community Service Commission. The Asian Studies Commission is in History, Arts and Libraries. Our next Governor will be presented with a plan that delineates how education policy can be realigned to better meet the needs of Michigan’s school children.

www.michigan.gov/mde





**Convene
a Public
Forum on Public
Education**

With the help of corporate underwriters, let's gather interested parties from business, labor, faith based, service, civic and community organizations along with scores of working adults, senior citizens, legislators, mayors, parents, relatives, and students of all ages to talk about education. Let's call the event "A Shared Vision and Common Agenda" Conference. Let's find out what works and what people are willing to contribute to make Michigan's system of public education the best it can be.

**Elevate
Public
Education**

Yes, ladders— not hammers— are still the answer. Following the example of the State Board of Education, we must stand tall for public education. We must work together to erase any inequities that exist and ensure equal access to high quality educational opportunities for all of Michigan's children. Teacher recruitment and retention depend on our ability to elevate the teaching profession to the noble and esteemed level it deserves.

**MICHIGAN
SUPPORT
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Invest
for Big
Returns**

We have the will, but we must also have the resources to act upon that will. A specialty license plate supporting public education will cost a bit more. But the proceeds will create mini-grants that will help teachers defray the cost of classroom supplies their students need to learn. Michigan now offers license plates for public universities, yet no one has been admitted to an institution of higher education without the solid foundation of a K-12 education. A year ago, I called for the creation of a Michigan Public Schools license plate. While a legislative hearing has been promised, I am still waiting.

**Plan
for
Life**

Education YES! recommends the development and use of a four-year education and employment plan for every high school student. This plan would chart a course for each student— whether his or her future includes college, other post-secondary education, work, or military service. Used as a guide, it will help ensure positive and productive life choices.



**“The true Statue of Liberty is our neighborhood public schools.
Who else takes our hungry, poor...
and gives them hope and opportunity?”**

Tom Watkins
Superintendent of Public Instruction



**The State Board of Education's
Strategic Goal for 2001-2002**

**Attain substantial and meaningful improvement
in academic achievement for all students, with a
primary emphasis on chronically underperforming
schools.**

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Statement of Compliance with Federal Law

The Michigan Department of Education complies with all Federal laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination, and with all requirements and regulations of the U. S. Department of Education.
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“Show me how this helps teachers teach and children learn.”

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DECISION MAKING YARDSTICK
2001

